

CHAPTER 36

Yâ Sîn

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 5 *sections*; 83 *verses*)

The title of this chapter is taken from the initial letters Yâ Sîn, in which the Holy Prophet is addressed. The object is to show that man can attain to perfection, and thus achieve the real object of his life, through contact with the *perfect man*, Muḥammad. It is called the heart of the Qur'ân (*Al-Jâmi'* (Hadîth), by Abû 'Îsâ Muḥammad ibn 'Îsâ *Tirmidhî* 43:6) owing to the importance of its subject-matter. For the date of revelation and its place in the arrangement of the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân see introductory note to chapter 34.

This chapter upholds the truth of the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân, and the first section shows that, though there would be strong opposition to it in the beginning, it would in the end give life to a dead humanity. The second speaks in parable of its portrayal in earlier revelation. The third draws attention to certain signs of its truth in nature — how life follows death and how light follows darkness — thus giving an indication that the same law is working in the spiritual world. The fourth shows that its acceptors and rejecters will be dealt with distinctly, so that their reward and requital will be evidence of the truth of the Qur'ân. The fifth and concluding section draws attention to the Resurrection or the life after death, as this alone can make a man feel responsibility for his actions and bring about his real transformation and attainment of perfection.

SECTION 1: Truth of the Qur'ân

In the name of Allâh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Yâ Sîn

2 By the Qur'ân, full of wisdom!

3 Surely you are one of the messengers,

4 On a right way.

5 A revelation of the Mighty, the Merciful,

6 That you may warn a people whose fathers were not warned, so they are heedless.^a

7 The word has indeed proved true of most of them, so they believe not.^a

8 Surely We have placed on their necks chains reaching up to the chins, so they have their heads raised aloft.^a

9 And We have set a barrier before them and a barrier behind them, thus We have covered them, so that they see not.^a

6a. The first warning of the Prophet was for the Makkans, but he was a warner for all nations as well; see 25:1.

7a. Sale's suggestion, that the *word* here signifies *a sentence of damnation pronounced at Adam's fall*, is a Christian interpretation of a Muslim doctrine. The *word which proved true* is that Truth is always opposed first but it wins in the end.

8a. This is a description of the proud attitude of the disbelievers towards the Prophet's preaching. As to the result being attributed to Allâh, see 2:26b. The chains of pride and stubbornness are really the things which prevent them from listening to and accepting the message of the Prophet.

9a. These were the barriers of their own stubbornness. The barriers before them prevented them from looking forward to the eminence to which they could rise by following the Truth, and those behind them prevented them from looking back to the history of nations which were destroyed on account of their rejection of the Truth.

10 And it is alike to them whether you warn them or warn them not — they believe not.

11 You canst warn him only who follows the Reminder and fears the Beneficent in secret; so give him good news of forgiveness and a generous reward.

12 Surely We give life to the dead, and We write down that which they send before and their footprints, and We record everything in a clear writing.^a

SECTION 2: Confirmation of the Truth

13 And set out to them a parable of the people of the town, when apostles came to it.

14 When We sent to them two, they rejected them both; then We strengthened (them) with a third, so they said: Surely we are sent to you.^a

15 They said:^a You are only mortals like ourselves, nor has the Beneficent revealed anything — you only lie.^b

12a. *What they send before* are their deeds, and *their footprints* are the marks they leave behind for others to follow.

14a. It should be noted that this is called a parable in the previous verse; therefore it is an error to name a particular town and three messengers who went together thereto. The parable is set forth only to point out the truth of the Holy Prophet. The two messengers sent before are Mûsâ and ‘Îsâ, both of whom clearly prophesied the advent of the Holy Prophet, and the third, with whom they are strengthened, is no other than the Holy Prophet himself, the fulfilment of prophecy in whose person without doubt strengthened the truth of previous revelation. The conversion of Arabia and its reclamation from idolatry had been tried both by the followers of Mûsâ and Jesus, and both had failed, and a third messenger was now sent.

15a. The message of the prophets to their people is the general message of all prophets, and the reply of the people is the general reply of the people, which is in consonance with the parable.

16 They said: Our *Rabb* knows that we are surely sent to you.

17 And our duty is only a clear deliverance (of the message).

18 They said: Surely we augur evil from you.^a If you desist not, we will surely stone you, and a painful chastisement from us will certainly afflict you.

19 They said: Your evil fortune is with you. What! If you are reminded!^a Nay, you are an extravagant people.

20 And from the remote part of the city there came a man running.^a He said: O my people, follow the apostles.

21 Follow him who asks of you no reward, and they are on the right course.

Part 23

22 And what reason have I that I should not serve Him Who created me and to Whom you will be brought back.

15b. Note that the people here deny all revelation. The Arabs rejected previous revelation as well as the revelation of the Holy Prophet.

18a. Distress in one form or other always overtakes a people when a prophet appears among them. The law is elsewhere stated in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân thus: "And indeed We sent messengers to nations before thee, then We seized them with distress and affliction that they might humble themselves" (6:42). It is to this distress that the rejectors of apostles refer.

19a. They are told that distress is not due to the Prophet's advent, but is the result of their own evil deeds, and the Prophet does no more than remind them and warn them of the consequences of their evil deeds.

20a. This man represents the believer in the Truth. Every prophet has testimony borne to his truth by one from among the people themselves. Thus the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân speaks of a believer from among the people of Pharaoh (40:28), and Joseph of Arimathaea believed in and helped Jesus, if only the story could have been true. The Holy Prophet Muḥammad had such a follower in Abû Bakr, who was the first to believe, while the others rejected.

23 Shall I take besides Him deities whose intercession if the Beneficent should desire to afflict me with harm, will avail me naught, nor can they deliver me?

24 Then I shall surely be in clear error.

25 Surely I believe in your *Rabb*, so hear me.

26 It was said: Enter the Garden.^a He said: Would that my people knew,

27 How my *Rabb* has forgiven me and made me of the honoured ones!

28 And We sent not down upon his people after him any host from heaven, nor do We ever send.^a

29 It was naught but a single cry, and lo! they were still.^a

30 Alas for the servants! Never does a messenger come to them but they mock him.

31 See they not how many generations We destroyed before them, that they return not to them?^a

32 And all — surely all — will be brought before Us.

26a. It is a promise to the believer that he will enjoy bliss and be successful. The next verse shows that he is made to possess honour in this world.

28a. This removes a misconception with regard to the coming of punishment. Hosts are not sent down from above to chastise the wicked, but causes are brought into existence on this very earth.

29a. Compare v. 49, where the *saiḥah*, or *single cry*, is the punishment with which the Holy Prophet's opponents are threatened. The *single cry* signifies only a sudden punishment.

31a. The words may also mean that many generations were destroyed before them because they did not turn to the messengers.

SECTION 3: Signs of the Truth

33 And a sign to them is the dead earth: We give life to it and bring forth from it grain so they eat of it.^a

34 And We make therein gardens of date-palms and grapes and We make springs to flow forth therein,

35 That they may eat of the fruit thereof, and their hands made it not. Will they not then give thanks?

36 Glory be to Him Who created pairs of all things, of what the earth grows, and of their kind and of what they know not!^a

37 And a sign to them is the night: We draw forth from it the day, then lo! they are in darkness;^a

38 And the sun moves on to its destination. That is the ordinance of the Mighty, the Knower.^a

39 And the moon, We have ordained for it stages till it becomes again as an old dry palm-branch.^a

33a. Quickening of the dead earth is again and again compared to the transformation which was to be brought about by the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân. How dead the earth, and particularly Arabia, was at the advent of the Holy Prophet, it is impossible to describe within the limits of a footnote. If then, the physical world showed the working of the Divine law that life is restored to the earth after its death, why should not the same law work in the religious world?

36a. This verse establishes a great scientific truth that pairs exist in all creation, even in the vegetable kingdom and in things which had not yet come to the knowledge of man. The Arabs certainly did not know this, but modern research corroborates this truth.

37a. The night of ignorance must now pass away; for as in the physical world night follows day and day follows night, so in the devotional world light is followed by the darkness of ignorance and the latter again gives place to light.

38a. This statement refers to the sun's revolution in space, a truth discovered only recently.

39a. These words only picture the apparent resemblance of the moon in its slenderness and curvature to an old dry palm-branch. Even such is the case of truth, which seems at first to be insignificant, but soon shines forth like a full moon. There is a clear reference in the word '*ada (it becomes again)*' that the light of Islâm will receive a setback and again shine in full resplendence.

40 Neither is it for the sun to overtake the moon, nor can the night outstrip the day.
And all float on in an orbit.^a

41 And a sign to them is that We bear their offspring in the laden ship,

42 And We have created for them the like thereof, whereon they ride.^a

43 And if We please, We may drown them, then there is no succour for them, nor can they be rescued^a—

44 But by mercy from Us and for enjoyment till a time.

45 And when it is said to them: Guard against that which is before you and that which is behind you, that mercy may be shown to you.^a

46 And there comes to them no message of the messages of their *Rabb* but they turn away from it.

47 And when it is said to them: Spend out of that which Allâh has given you, those who disbelieve say to those who believe: Shall we feed him whom, if Allâh please, He could feed? You are in naught but clear error.^a

40a. Even truth and falsehood have their courses. As night must disappear with the rise of the day, so falsehood must vanish before the light of Truth. The flotation of the heavenly bodies in their orbits is a statement beyond the ken of an Arabian of 1,300 years ago. The Arabic Glorious Qur'ân is a book for the religious guidance of human beings, but it discloses a large number of scientific truths which were not known to man at the revelation of the Book.

42a. The ships that bear man on the seas are spoken of in verse 41. These were known to man at the time of the revelation of the Qur'ân. But this verse speaks of other ships,

the like thereof. These are the ships that bear man in the air, the airships and the aeroplanes of today. They are spoken of as being created by Allâh, because it is through the knowledge and means that Allâh has given human beings that they are able to acquire mastery of the air and make these ships.

43a. This is a warning of the impending punishment. Drowning in the sea signifies their destruction, wherever it may take place. The word chosen to describe the punishment is one which shows the utter helplessness of the sufferers.

45a. *That which is before you* signifies the punishment which must overtake them in this life, and *that which is behind you* means the consequences of evil, which they would witness in the Hereafter.

48 And they say: When will this promise come to pass, if you are truthful?

49 They await but a single cry, which will overtake them while they contend.

50 So they will not be able to make a bequest, nor will they return to their families.^a

SECTION 4: **Reward and Punishment**

51 And the trumpet is blown, when lo! From their graves they will hasten on to their *Rabb*.

52 They will say: O woe to us! Who has raised us up from our sleeping-place?^a This is what the Beneficent promised and the messengers told the truth.

53 It is but a single cry, when lo! They are all brought before Us.

54 So this day no soul is wronged in aught; and you is not rewarded aught but for what you did.

47a. So they turned neither to submission to Allâh, nor to sympathy for their fellow-beings.

50a. This is a prophetic description of the battle of Badr. The Quraish attacked Madînah to annihilate Islâm but the leaders of evil were themselves finished there, and could neither make a bequest, nor did they return to their families.

52a. The grave is called a sleeping-place even for the disbelievers, because, as compared with the severer punishment of hell, the grave would be to them a sleeping-place. It should be noted that *the grave* signifies the *condition after life is ended in this world*.

55 Surely the owners of the Garden are on that day in a happy occupation.
56 They and their wives are in shades, reclining on raised couches.
57 They have fruits therein, and they have whatever they desire.
58 Peace! A word from a Merciful Lord.^a
59 And withdraw to-day, O guilty ones!
60 Did I not charge you, O children of Âdam, that you serve not the *Shaitân*? Surely he is your open enemy.
61 And that you serve Me. This is the right way.
62 And certainly he led astray numerous people from among you. Could you not then understand?
63 This is the hell which you were promised.
64 Enter it this day because you disbelieved.
65 That day We shall seal their mouths, and their hands will speak to Us, and their feet will bear witness as to what they earned.
66 And if We pleased, We would put out their eyes, then they would strive to get first to the way, but how should they see?^a
67 And if We pleased, We would transform them in their place, then they would not be able to go on, or turn back.^a

58a. Here we have another picture of the Muslim paradise. After describing the various blessings, it sums them up in a single word, *peace*.

66a. It is a punishment for the reprobate. They shut their eyes to the truth with such persistence that their eyes become blind; they no longer see, even if they would.

SECTION 5: The Resurrection

68 And whomsoever We cause to live long, We reduce to an abject state in creation. Do they not understand?^a
69 And We have not taught him poetry, nor is it meet for him.^a This is naught but a Reminder and a plain Qur'ân,
70 To warn him who would have life, and (that) the word may prove true against the disbelievers.

71 See they not that We have created cattle for them, out of what Our hands have wrought, so they are their masters?

72 And We have subjected them to them, so some of them they ride, and some they eat.

73 And therein they have advantages and drinks. Will they not then give thanks?

74 And they take gods besides Allâh that they may be helped.

75 They are not able to help them, and they are a host brought up before them.^a

67a. *Maskh* indicates *changing from a good to a bad state*. Thus *masakha-hû* signifies *he transformed him into a fouler or uglier shape* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane); and *masakha al-nâqata* means *he rendered the she-camel lean and wounded her back by fatigue and use* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). Hence the meaning of *transforming them in their place* is taking away their power and rendering them weak and turning them into an evil plight.

68a. It is a general law of nature that every living thing must deteriorate; the application here is to individuals as well as nations.

69a. Its negation as poetry is meant to convey the seriousness of the subjects that the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân deals with.

75a. The guilty leaders will be brought up for punishment before their followers and they will not be able to help them. Or, the worshippers of false deities will be brought up for punishment in the presence of those deities and they will not be able to help them.

76 So let not their speech grieve thee. Surely We know what they do in secret and what they do openly.

77 Does not man see that We have created him from the small life-germ? Then lo! he is an open disputant.

78 And he strikes out a likeness for Us^a and forgets his own creation. Says he: Who will give life to the bones, when they are rotten?

79 Say: He will give life to them, Who brought them into existence at first, and He is Knower of all creation,

80 Who produced fire for you out of the green tree, so that with it you kindle.^a

81 Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like of them?^a
Yea! And He is the Creator (of all), the Knower.

82 His command, when He intends anything, is only to say to it, Be, and it is.

83 So glory be to Him in Whose hand is the kingdom of all things! And to Him you will be returned.

78a. The striking out of a likeness signifies the setting up of gods with Allah.

80a. The reference is to the phenomenon of resinous trees catching fire through friction of their branches caused by wind. Even thus a new life results from man's contact with the *Perfect Man*, whom Allâh has sent, and this new life is the basis of a life after death.

81a. The original is *mithla-hum*, where the personal pronoun *hum* (*them*) refers to men, not to heaven and earth. In the Resurrection, therefore, men will be the like of what they are here, not exactly the same bodies of clay. Elsewhere, after mentioning that man wonders at the new creation, it is said: "We know indeed what the earth diminishes of them, and with Us is a book that preserves" (50:4). The body may become dust; but what man does of good or evil is preserved, and it is according to this good or evil that he receives a new body. The idea of Resurrection is carried to perfection in Islâm, and the Resurrection is meant to give a new life to all. Ultimately the *nafs* of human beings is returned to the presence of the Divine Being, and that is again and again called the meeting with Allâh.